

# News from Ed Markey

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## MARKEY CALLS ON NRC TO TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT AGAINST TERRORIST "DIRTY BOMB"

### Missing Millstone Fuel Rods, Recurring Losses of Radioactive Sources Raise Concerns About Terrorist Threat

WASHINGTON, D.C. --

Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) today released a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) raising concerns that lax security at nuclear power plants and other nuclear licensees may enable terrorist groups to acquire radioactive materials that could be used to fabricate a crude "dirty bomb" that would use conventional explosives to spread radioactivity over a wide area. The Markey letter raises concerns about two spent fuel rods that have been missing from Millstone Unit 1 in Connecticut for over 20 years, as well as other reported instances of lax controls over radioactive materials and sources.

"We know that Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda terrorist organization have been trying to obtain nuclear materials, and today's papers report that they may have made greater strides towards this goal than had been previously believed," said Rep. Markey.

Rep. Markey continued, "In light of this threat, we can no longer tolerate an environment in which spent fuel rods go missing for 20 years, radioactive sources are reported to be at facilities that no longer exist, or which fail to properly secure them against theft or diversion."

Rep. Markey is a senior Democratic Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over the NRC and the nuclear industry. He is also Co-Chairman of the Bipartisan Task Force on Non-Proliferation and author of the 1982 book, *Nuclear Peril*, which warned of the risks of nuclear proliferation. The letter Rep. Markey released today raised questions in three areas:

- The fact that Northeast Utilities, the former operator of Millstone Nuclear Power Station Unit 1, has been unable to account for the whereabouts of two highly radioactive spent fuel rods after a nearly year-long investigation. The utility has reported that these fuel rods may have been lost since 1980, but that it only discovered they were missing last year.
- The fact that the Department of Energy's Inspector General (DOE IG) has raised concerns in a recent report that government inventories reported that "significant quantities of Government-owned special nuclear material were held by at least two NRC licensees despite the fact that the facilities no longer existed" and that a significant quantity of Government-owned plutonium was held at a plant whose license the NRC terminated in 1993. According to the DOE IG report, the NRC was unable to explain the discrepancies. This report also documented an instance in which the NRC retrieved a plutonium/beryllium source from an unsecured area of a high school that had not been licensed to hold the material for many years.

· The fact that there have been persistent reports of problems with losses of estimated 2 million radioactive sources used in a wide array of medical, research, commercial, and industrial applications around the United States, raising concerns about the nature and adequacy of existing controls over these materials.

Rep. Markey concluded, "Yesterday, Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge again warned Americans that we were facing a heightened threat of terrorist attacks. In light of the current situation, I believe the NRC needs to rethink whether there are sufficient safeguards and protections in place to prevent against the theft or diversion of nuclear materials that a terrorist could use to fabricate a 'dirty bomb.'"

More information at [www.house.gov/markey](http://www.house.gov/markey) under the Anti-Terrorism sub-heading.

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